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Wisconsin Organizations Awarded DOE SunShot Grant

CUSTER, WI – A group of Wisconsin cities, non-profits and other organizations was awarded more than \$450,000 this month when the U.S. Department of Energy announced the recipients of its Sunshot Initiative Rooftop Solar Challenge. The DOE SunShot Initiative is a collaborative national initiative to make solar energy cost competitive with other forms of energy by the end of the decade. Reducing the installed cost of solar energy systems by about 75% will drive widespread, large-scale adoption of this renewable energy technology and restore U.S. leadership in the global clean energy race.

The DOE is supporting the development of tools and approaches that will reduce balance of system non-hardware costs for solar energy systems. These soft costs--expenses associated with permitting, financing, interconnection, and inspection--can account for 20% of the total expense of solar electric system installations.

The recipients of the grant include the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), the City of Madison, the City of Milwaukee, the City of Marshfield, L&S Technical Associates, Madison Solar Consulting, Sustainable Resource Group and RENEW Wisconsin. This group, called *Grow Solar Wisconsin*, is one of 22 organizations nationwide selected to lead the way in solar power deployment.

With about 12 megawatts of solar electric systems installed, sufficient for powering 1,500 Wisconsin homes, Wisconsin has well developed infrastructure for solar electric installation services. Wisconsin is also home to two Department of Energy Solar American Communities (Madison and Milwaukee) as well as a nationally recognized solar training facility (the Midwest Renewable Energy Association). The *Grow Solar Wisconsin* group plans to build on this history by streamlining local permitting processes, developing clear strategies to improve Wisconsin's net metering and interconnection standards, working to allow third parties to own solar electric systems, and supporting solar financing and group purchase options.

"There has been significant progress in Wisconsin's solar market over the last five years," said MREA's Executive Director Nick Hylla. "In a few areas of the State, the permitting, inspection and electric utility connection of solar electric systems is well established and efficient. We can thank the forward thinking municipalities, and utilities for their hard work in streamlining this process. This partnership will allow us to expand on this good work and replicate it throughout the State. Our goal is to ensure that system owners, designers and installers have access to a well-defined and efficient process for the installation of renewable energy systems at homes and businesses throughout Wisconsin."

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization. Founded in 1990, the MREA promotes renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through education and demonstration.

To learn more, call 715-592-6595 or visit www.midwestrenew.org.

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